

# *Sketch*

---

*Volume 10, Number 1*

1943

*Article 2*

---

## Matt's Song

Keith Shillington\*

\*Iowa State College

Copyright ©1943 by the authors. *Sketch* is produced by The Berkeley Electronic Press (bepress).  
<http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/sketch>

# Matt's Song

Keith Shillington

## **Abstract**

On either side of me the great wheels turn, Sifting the hot dry earth into the air like smoke...



## Matt's Song

Keith Shillington

On either side of me the great wheels turn,  
Sifting the hot dry earth into the air like smoke.  
I feel the skin upon my face grow taut with dust.  
My back sags with the heat and sweat and riverlets  
Of dried mud. My arms grow red and sore  
Where the three o'clock sun strikes its arc and burns,  
And the drying breezes rise like oscillating fans  
Only now and then, and seldom cool enough,  
And all the clouds conspire to shade my neighbor's land.

Under me between the six death-dealing shovels  
The young corn hills pass like blanket ties,  
One after one, after one, until I feel that I am still  
And the world is moving, a great equator of corn  
Sprigged in a long black velvet ribbon before my eyes.  
Great masses of morning glories writhe behind the plows,  
Their pure pale trumpets withering, and far ahead the wary crow  
Searches out his meal, one eye cocked to watch  
The progress of the plow across the field—and flies.

And then I realize that Prince is running wet  
 With sweat, for he is trying to pull the plow alone,  
 And Queen hangs back, riding the trees to let him.  
 Queen takes the heat much better, too, but then  
 No one ever tried to cut two days grain in one  
 With her. It was damned hot that July. The fools kept  
 The binders going until the horses nearly fell,  
 And Prince lost his wind. There is no need, I think,  
 To overheat the horse which serves me well.

Queen, the little western mare, is not to be trusted.  
 She has taken flight at seeing her mate's fly net  
 Flapping in the wind beside her and dragged the corn plow  
 Halfway down the lane like a flying chariot,  
 Dust rising from its dragging shovels and her whole body  
 Gaunt and long with fear. And not until the tongue broke  
 And stuck would she stop. She has smashed more things  
 In runaways than any three horses, and she would still,  
 But Prince is too old and tired for running with her now.

Yet when I turn home at night, no matter how tired they are,  
 They want to run to get there. Seems as if horses know  
 What's quitting time and want to go  
 Running like the devil for feed and peace—  
 For the night at least—  
 And they never think about tomorrow.

---

## L'une a L'autre

Charlene Fredricksen

So many sympathize with you  
 Because your son loves me;  
 And other mothers mourn your loss.  
 That should not be.  
 It seems that no one thinks I care.  
 How can I let them know  
 I envy you for all the years  
 You watched him grow?